

Weakley County Strategic Economic Development Plan 2004

This Strategic Economic Development Plan is designed as a road map to assist Weakley County and each of its incorporated cities in their effort to achieve excellence in community and economic development. By adoption of this strategic plan and working with each other, with various state and local agencies, and with various alliances of other government and non-government entities, the officials of Weakley County and each of its cities recognize that our hope for success in improving the quality of life and economic well being of our citizens is dependent upon our efforts to work together.

Approach to Development of the Plan

The Weakley County Chamber of Commerce provided the leadership and coordination for development of this proposed plan.

Initially, the motivation for development of the plan was selection of Weakley County by the Tennessee Department of Economic Development as a pilot county for participation in the revised Governor's Three Star Program. This program recognizes excellence among counties. The program has been in existence for many years but Governor Bredesen and his staff are making significant changes to the program. Some of the requirements of the new program involve the existence of a strategic economic development plan and significantly enhanced involvement of the county commission as the primary legislative body of the county in the approval and accomplishment of the strategic plan.

To accomplish development of a strategic economic development plan for Weakley County, a Leadership Committee was first formed. This committee consisted of the county mayor, each city mayor, the economic development representatives of Dresden and Martin, and the executive committees and executive directors of the Chamber of Commerce and the Joint Economic and Community Development Board.

First, the Leadership Committee organized the areas of activity to be considered into six divisions: business development, visitor development, community involvement, job skills development, community livability, and community pride.

The Leadership Committee determined that the work of developing the plan should involve a group of Weakley County citizens who were broadly representative of the county. Six different workgroups were selected. Each workgroup was selected to include representatives of each city board, the county commission, and other community and business leaders from across the county. (A listing of those who served on a workgroup is attached.) Each of the workgroups was given the charge of making recommendations for inclusion in the plan from their area of work.

The Leadership Committee has now received the input of the workgroups and organized it into this proposed Strategic Economic Development Plan. The workgroups took their assignments seriously and each put considerable effort into developing recommendations. The Leadership Committee has made adjustments as determined needed to the recommendations received, but, for the most part, the proposed plan reflects the input of the workgroups. The plan as developed is recommended to the Weakley County Board of Commissioners for consideration and approval.

Major Objectives for the Economic Development of Weakley County

1. Existing industries and businesses of the County must be supported and efforts made to strengthen them with the objective of ensuring they continue to be a part of the Weakley County economic base.
2. The County must make a substantially greater commitment to attracting new business and industry. The way that we are structured to pursue new business and industry must be reviewed and restructured as deemed necessary. The commitment of resources to economic development must be realistically in line with the results we expect to achieve. The commitment must be long term.
3. Weakley County has many features that make it attractive for retirees. The economic activity from retirees who locate here, bring their assets here, and involve themselves in our communities is believed to be substantial yet we are not pursuing this on a substantial and consistent basis.
4. Leadership development for both adult and youth citizens must be continued.
5. The opportunities for the alumni of the leadership development programs to make contributions to Weakley County must be enhanced and directed in a way to capitalize on the skills they have received as participants in these development programs.
6. Weakley County must commit to being a regional partner. This first involves all governmental entities within the county working together. This must also involve our working with surrounding counties to join forces in economic development.
7. Weakley County should pursue the development of planning, zoning, and growth management policies outside of the incorporated cities of the county. It is recognized that counties that provide for planned growth have a much better chance of successfully recruiting business, industry, and residential growth.
8. Efforts to promote health awareness and improve the quality of life for residents are important and need renewed attention and resources.
9. Energy education has the potential for saving considerable money for county residents. The example for this should begin with steps taken by all city and county governmental units in the management of their facilities and equipment.
10. Coordination of the communication of community activities should be improved.
11. Improvement of the attractiveness and appearance of the county should be given attention and a citizen committee be created with responsibilities for oversight for this be created.
12. The purpose of the County waste disposal site is not well known. Steps should be taken to improve the use of this facility.
13. The development of job skills needed by our current and future workforce must be a constant high priority for business and industry, our local schools, sources of

technical education, colleges, and the parents of Weakley County students. The means for ensuring that these stakeholders in job skills development communicate more effectively and make more effective use of resources must be strengthened.

Action Plans for Accomplishing the Strategic Economic Development Plan Objectives

The action plans that follow come from the recommendations of the six citizen workgroups. They have been condensed for the purposes of presenting this proposed plan. But the recommendations received from each workgroup are detailed in the workpapers of each workgroup and should be referred to by those parties that will be working on accomplishing the objectives of this proposed plan. The vision of the workgroups, as reflected in their complete recommendations, will be invaluable to those who follow.

It is recognized that some of the action plans involve potential impacts on the budget of Weakley County and that the budget for the fiscal year 2004-2005 has already been adopted. Strategic action plans that involve fiscal impacts will be approached such that they would be considered in the fiscal year 2005-2006 budget. Considerable preparatory work is required for most such action plans and that work can be started now.

Please note that we have also recommended the person or group that should have the responsibility for accomplishing each action plan.

All action plans that have an asterisk (*) before them are requirements of the Three Star program.

1. *Visitation Program – Each local industry should be visited on-site a minimum of twice per year. These visits should be for the purposes of acknowledging the appreciation of the community for the industry and to make contact with key management personnel. The officials who should make the visit should include a representative from the Chamber, a county official (e.g., road supervisor if it is known that a conference with such a person is needed), and local mayor or other city officials.
Responsibility: Chamber of Commerce
2. *Recognition Event – An annual county-wide industry appreciation event will be held. This will be an opportunity to recognize local business and industry leaders and allow them the opportunity to socialize.
Responsibility: Chamber of Commerce
3. *Managers' Organization – An organization of local plant managers to meet quarterly to discuss issues and exchange information will be created, supported, and maintained. Members noted that existing industry can serve as an enticement for new industry in an area.
Responsibility: Chamber of Commerce
4. *Corporate Headquarters Contact Program – A systematic procedure of periodically contacting the corporate headquarters that are located outside

Weakley County of industries located in Weakley County will be developed and followed.

Responsibility: Chamber of Commerce

5. *For the county, both the Chamber of Commerce and the Joint Economic and Community Development Board have responsibilities in their charters for industrial recruitment. In addition, we have people and resources in each of the incorporated cities devoted to industrial recruitment. We need to resolve where the responsibilities and accountabilities for industrial recruitment will be and formalize the necessary agreements to ensure that industrial recruitment occurs as efficiently and effectively as possible.

Responsibility: Chamber board, JECDB board, and city boards

6. Prospect Team. A prospect team consisting of broad-based and educated members should be formed to meet with potential prospects. The prospect team should be inclusive of all parts of the county. Industry recruitment is a major concern for our county. To insure this concern is not dimmed and the team's focus is not divided, the Prospect Team should have no other responsibilities than assisting in the recruitment of industry.

Responsibility: JECDB Board

7. Development of a county or regional industrial park should be pursued.

Responsibility: JECDB Board

8. *Maintain a website that will inform visitors about our county and what we have to offer. This website should include a calendar of events for the entire community including the individual towns, events at UTM, and the surrounding region. It should include what is attractive about Weakley County because of its location to regional attractions.

Responsibility: Chamber of Commerce

9. Promotional materials will be prepared that focus specifically on retirees. Our area has the potential to be a retirement haven because of its close proximity to all types of recreational activities, excellent health care, the University of Tennessee at Martin, the weather, low cost of living and many other reasons. A brochure with this information, targeting retirees, would be an excellent resource that could be provided to anyone who inquires. In addition, these brochures can be placed at strategic locations such as visitor centers to reach out to people passing through our area.

Responsibility: Chamber of Commerce

10. The community should come together in support of a single event that we can promote regionally. We might consider a county-wide fair or all support the rodeo at UTM—any event that can bring all the communities together to work toward a common goal.

Responsibility: Chamber of Commerce, Leadership Weakley County Alumni

11. *Adult Leadership Development. Continue the excellent Leadership Weakley County program. Involve Farm Bureau with the "Agriculture" part of the program. The session on "Tourism" needs to include more regional opportunities ie. promoting Kentucky Lake & Reelfoot Lake together possibly as package to tourists. Add "Health" as a new session. Study area medical facilities,

employment opportunities, TennCare/insurance, social issues, volunteer agencies, etc.

Responsibility: Chamber of Commerce

12. Youth Leadership Development. Continue the First State Bank Youth Leadership Program. Develop a way to involve youth leadership program graduates with city/county boards.

Responsibility: Chamber of Commerce

13. Develop a formal working relationship with at least one other county located in Northwest Tennessee to form a strategic alliance to solve common problems and maximize economic development for the region included in the alliance.

Responsibility: Chamber of Commerce and JECDB

14. Work with the University of Tennessee at Martin to leverage the resources of UTM in supporting economic development in the region.

Responsibility: Chamber of Commerce and JECDB

15. Hire an industrial recruiter for Weakley County.

Responsibility: JECDB

16. A meeting between all city and county elected and appointed officials is to be held semi-annually to discuss common problems and opportunities to work more efficiently by working together.

Responsibility: Chamber of Commerce

17. To promote volunteerism in the county, the following plans are proposed:

- Youth leadership program graduates be required to work with the Chamber to volunteer with different agencies ie. United Way, Habitat for Humanity.
- A “Honor – Volunteer Student of the Year” award be given youth leadership student(s) who show significant leadership/volunteerism throughout the year. This award can be given at community festivals or at the annual Chamber dinner.
- The Chamber needs to develop a listing of community activities available throughout Weakley County. This would be helpful for leadership students and also for new residents of Weakley County.

Responsibility: Chamber of Commerce

18. Develop and implement a land use plan for unincorporated areas of Weakley County. Attention should be given to making the existing municipalities within Weakley County central areas of commercial, industrial and residential growth. Provide for education of county commissioners and citizens of the benefits to property owners of land use planning outside municipal boundaries.

Responsibility: County Board of Commissioners and Chamber of Commerce

19. Government officials should develop and enforce housing policies that enhance the overall residential atmosphere of the community and surrounding county areas. Specific action plans to be followed:

- Local officials should strive to encourage stable neighborhoods with affordable housing.
- Local officials should create an atmosphere of awareness of special housing needs for handicapped individuals and elderly people on fixed incomes.
- Local leaders should strive to maximize the use of federal and state housing assistance programs. A plan for balanced housing needs in every community

in Weakley County should be considered and adopted by each municipality and the County Commission. Public and private sector partnerships should be encouraged to meet the needs of a diverse economic population.

Responsibility: Chamber of Commerce

20. Health awareness is a vital step toward improving the quality of life for all Weakley County residents. *A Health Care Committee will be formed to monitor the effectiveness of local health care and ensure the presence of a coordinated effort with the local health units in addressing health care services. Members of the Committee will represent physicians, hospital and clinic administrators, nurse practitioners and physician assistants, emergency medical services, public health, public schools, and others determined appropriate by the County Commission. The authority of the committee will be as determined by the County Commission. Activities of the Committee may include, but are not limited to, ensuring the following services are available: immunizations, approved water supply system, environmental health protection services, communicable disease control and prevention, the WIC program, and other items that may require attention from time to time.

Responsibility: Chamber of Commerce

21. To develop ways to promote and improve community pride for residents and businesses in Weakley County, a group should be created known as Chamber Ambassadors. Ambassadors will be selected to represent each city within the county. The group will also support the Chamber at new business ribbon cuttings and various other events.

Responsibility: Chamber of Commerce and Leadership Weakley County Alumni

22. A county-wide Beautification Committee will be created to promote a comprehensive, coordinated approach to improving the county's appearance. The committee will develop a five-year plan for the beautification of the community, including entrances to the county, cities, residential neighborhoods, and commercial and industrial areas. Solid waste management practices including plans for resource recovery and recycling should be reviewed. Under the oversight of the committee, two beautification projects must be completed each year that will contribute to the enhancement of visual and scenic values. The committee will consider the County becoming a participant in the Keep Tennessee Beautiful program. The committee will address needed litter and recycling issues. The committee will have oversight of the Tennessee Adopt-A-Highway program.

Responsibility: Chamber of Commerce

23. Educate the community on the availability and uses for the county Convenience Center.

Responsibility: Appropriate County department.

24. *An Education Committee shall be established which includes parents, educators (administrators, teachers, counselors at all levels), students, school board members, employers, representatives from TN employment securities office, and local government representatives. Current organized groups would serve as the foundation for this committee that includes Education Edge, Partners in Education, and School Advisory Boards. The purpose of this committee shall be

to address issues relating to the development of job related skills and adult literacy, and other responsibilities that may be assigned to it. This committee will be amenable to the county commission

Responsibility: Chamber of Commerce and County Commission

Accountability for the Weakley County Strategic Economic Development Plan

The overall responsibility for the plan will rest with the Weakley County Board of Commissioners with primary support for the monitoring and review resting with the Chamber of Commerce. Accountability of each entity designated as having responsibility for each action plan specified above will be directly to the County Commission. The Chamber will report to the Commission on the status of the accomplishment of the action plans on a semi-annual basis.

The Chamber will conduct a review process for the plan on an annual basis and once per year will present to the Board of Commissioners an updated proposed strategic plan for the Board's consideration and approval. It is anticipated that a similar procedure of soliciting broad based input from business and community leaders will be used each year. It is proposed that the review and updating of the Weakley County Strategic Plan will be scheduled in order to produce a recommended plan to the Commission at its regular meeting in March. This will permit adequate time for inclusion of any items having fiscal impact in the next fiscal year's budget.

Recommendation

It is the recommendation of the Leadership Committee that this proposed Strategic Economic Development Plan be adopted by the Board of County Commissioners and that further support in each way required be extended to the performance and accomplishment of the recommended action plans.

2004 Leadership Committee

Joe Brasher	Suzie German	Andy Page
Randy Brundige	Karen House	James Gary Roberts
Jack Dunning	Eddie Joe McKelvey	Hollie Vowell
Danny Forrester	Junior Moore	Jimmy Westbrook
Ron Gifford		

Workgroup Participants

John Bucy	Randy Edwards	Larry Gaylord
John Clark	Wendell Alexander	Wayne McCreight
Paula Hearn	Mike Biggs	Donna Stricklin
Stan Johnson	Jerry Brigance	Joe Brasher
Randy Potts	Danny Lackey	Dick Phebus
James Gary Roberts	John Thompson	Kermit Hopper
Hollie Vowell	Jennifer Branscum	Virginia Grimes
Andy Page	April Baker	Shelly Bowers
Tracy McGehee	Joe Grooms	Mike Forchione
Danny Forrester	Natalie Boyd	Cathy Smith

Junior Moore
Alan Owen
Bob Gardner
Bob Moseley

Donna Godwin
Mac Buckley
Marvin Downing

Mike Caudle
Lorre Stout
Andrea Hughes